The Eidetic Afterlife Hypothesis: Historical Archive

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CANVAS REBEL

Meet J. Martin Strangeweather

February 8, 2024

We're excited to introduce you to the always interesting and insightful J. Martin Strangeweather. We hope you'll enjoy our conversation with J. Martin below.

Alright, J. Martin thanks for taking the time to share your stories and insights with us today. What's been the most meaningful project you've worked on?

In 2020, the initial year of the pandemic, I organized a yearlong citywide "poetry in quarantine" project in Santa Ana, California. The project was called "Santa Ana, a Year in Poetry." The project featured the work of 52 local poets over the course of 52 weeks, showcasing their poems on various literary websites, local news outlets, and the Santa Ana Public Library, in addition to paying each poet a $25 honorarium. In 2022, I organized a countywide short story project involving a rigorous workshop experience that would result in the publishing of an anthology of stories featuring animal protagonists. The anthology is called "Zoo-Fi: an Anthology of Zoological Fiction." Each participant was paid a $100 honorarium. Last year (2023) I worked with a small group of artists to create a visual compendium of every mythical and legendary female in history throughout the world, many of whom had never been depicted before–every heroine, witch, sorceress, goddess, demoness, ogress, giantess, and supernatural woman (ghost, fairy, yōkai, etcetera). The project is called "Witchery Worldwide" and you can find the entirety of it on Instagram @witcheryworldwide. It was a seemingly impossible task, but through the use of AI-generative technology, the project is now 99.99% complete (as such vast undertakings may never be considered fully complete).

But I'd have to say my most monumental project also happens to be my most recent project. It's a small black book titled The Eidetic Afterlife Hypothesis (a reinterpretation of death and dying). The book explores another way of understanding the afterlife, a way that is sensible and measurable (to a certain degree) as well as impartial and universal, hidden in plain sight beneath the broad categories of theism, agnosticism, and atheism. The book also includes a section on the evolution of the concept of the soul, a musical number that explains the aging process in excruciating detail, and several poetic meditations/exercises meant to prepare oneself for the experience of eternity.

As always, we appreciate you sharing your insights and we've got a few more questions for you, but before we get to all of that can you take a minute to introduce yourself and give our readers some of your back background and context?

My whole adult life (and much of my youth) has been an obsessive pursuit of knowledge, particularly in the areas of history, theology, philosophy, psychology, and science. My mission is simply to try and leave this world better off than I found it. To bring magic and mystery and wonder back into our everyday experience. To make better tools with which to construct healthier realities. And in order to do this, I must not obsess over my headcount of followers and fans. New ideas have always been met with resistance. Authenticity is its own reward, and curse.

Is there mission driving your creative journey?

The goal of this book is to foster a greater sense of unity and understanding among humans. There are so many things dividing us, but most of these are mired in bad perspectives (bad thinking). If we look for divisions, we'll find things to divide us, but if we look for connections, we'll find them as well. Of course we can't all share the same views on reality, but we can in fact share the same views regarding what it means to view something at all—to be a viewer:

1) Viewers only view a portion of the subject at hand, which should never be mistaken for the whole.

2) Viewers see their own history's reflection superimposed over everything they view. When you see the red wheelbarrow, it reminds you of all the times you had to rake leaves during Autumn in Maine and put them in a red wheelbarrow, creating a fond sense of nostalgia. But when I see the red wheelbarrow, it reminds me of that time I had to write an essay in high school about a poem titled The Red Wheelbarrow, dredging up the frustration I experienced while trying to explain the poem.

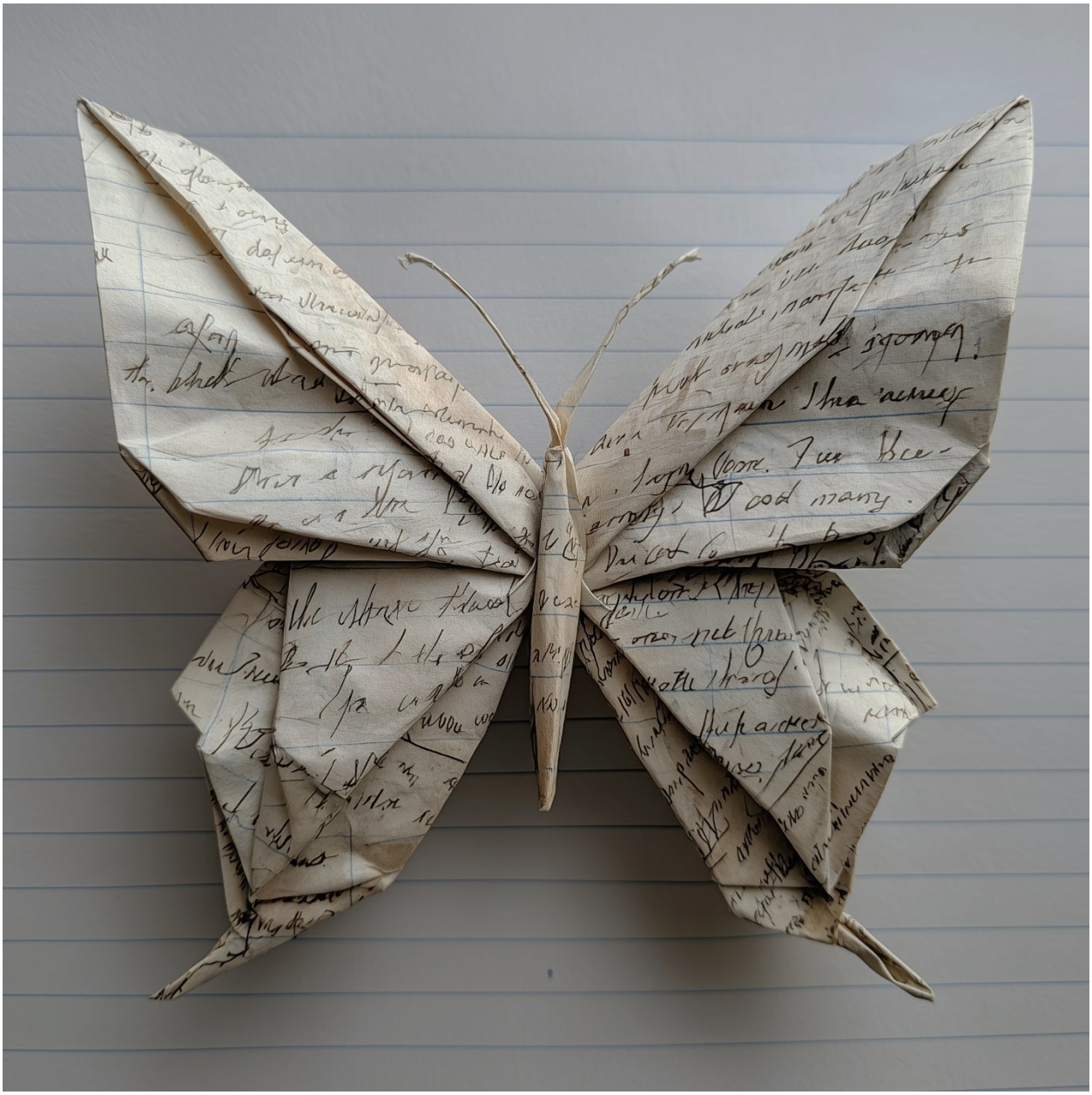
3) Viewers are generally unaware of the extent to which their view is manufactured by their location in history and geography, not to mention their socioeconomic status.

Is there something you think non-creatives will struggle to understand about your journey as a creative?

I first wrote of the Eidetic Afterlife Hypothesis in a magazine called California Pop back in 2004. The article received quite a response, mostly positive, but there were a few who questioned my motives, and that's fair. The Eidetic Afterlife Hypothesis began as a personal journey. I was just trying to figure things out for myself, wrestling with age-old questions like "What happens we die?" and "How should our understanding of death affect the way we live?" Who hasn't given serious thought to the subject of death and the afterlife? Owing to my extensive studies in theology, philosophy, psychology, neuroscience, relativity theory, and even quantum mechanics, I surmised that our afterlife hides within each one of us, and through A) synaptic overload, B) oxygen deprivation, C) the shutdown of certain regions of the brain responsible for our sense of the passage of time, and D) the release of various neurochemicals during the final stage of the dying process, eternity is conjured in the few moments preceding death as opposed to afterward. This is a working hypothesis, not a religion. It's more like a work of art, which many non-creative mindsets find difficult to understand. While the hypothesis attempts to sidestep the debate between atheism, agnosticism, and theism, its transformative effect on each of these standpoints cannot be overlooked.

Link to the original article:

https://canvasrebel.com/meet-j-martin-strangeweather/?fbclid=IwY2xjawP_URJleHRuA2FlbQIxMABicmlkETA2V3oxZ2JmMnBQcXhIZmxTc3J0YwZhcHBfaWQQMjIyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg5MgABHoaApV7kBThSo-DMPHvBTZZiljtc20sj9KbaPOR9Fjzyys56L6wJ5fQujt6n_aem_Ks0TB5WhmFyLrGoOfnz-fA



Posted to Facebook on June 16, 2024

Q & A with J

Hey there, everyone. I received emails from a few of you last week, asking thoughtful questions. I've decided to make my answers public…

Q: Dear Mr. Strangeweather, my mother is terminally ill and her health is declining rapidly. She is currently still lucid. I really vibe with your hypothesis and I was wondering if I should share it with her. She is Catholic, but also open-minded. When I talk to her now it feels like I'm keeping a secret from her.

A: My suggestion would be not to share the hypothesis with her. If she feels secure in her relationship with God and isn't questioning the meaning of life, there's no reason to introduce any ideas that might unsettle her in this fragile last phase of her earthly existence. At this point, it's about *her* understanding of God and the afterlife, not yours. In other words, *if it ain't broke, don't fix it*.

Try to find comfort in the knowledge that if the hypothesis is correct she will indeed go to heaven, whatever that term means to her, even if you yourself have no belief in any sort of afterlife. That said, don't ever deny your grief. The grieving process is an important part of the death experience, an important part of life. Not only does grieving help bring closure, grief imparts wisdom, empathy, and compassion, making you more human. Allow yourself to be honest and vulnerable when a loved one passes. There is strength in vulnerability, and not allowing yourself to be vulnerable leads to an inauthentic existence. No matter what anyone tells you, there is no time limit to grieving.

Q: Hello J, or do you go by Martin, or J. Martin, or Mr. Strangeweather? I read your book and all of your notes. I only have one question for you: Why did you choose to release this material on Facebook of all places?

A: Because you probably never would have read it otherwise. Facebook is a huge public platform. I want the hypothesis to be easily accessible, not hidden behind a paywall, and people from all walks of life spend a lot of time on social media. But Facebook is just one of the places for someone to encounter the hypothesis. It's also available to read for free on The Internet Archive, the Near-Death Experience Research Foundation's website, and Paper Press Books & Associates Publishing Company's website. You can even pick up a hardcopy of *The Eidetic Afterlife Hypothesis* at your local Barnes & Noble and numerous other booksellers worldwide.

Q: Hi J! Are you an end-of-life doula?

A: No. I'm more of a disturber than a comforter, but I respect the services doulas provide.

The Eidetic Afterlife Hypothesis is being discussed worldwide! Here is an in-depth article about the hypothesis from the science website Ideje.hr in Croatia. I used Google Translator to convert the article into English, so a few sentences are clunky. Here is the full text, with a link to the original article below (approximately a 15-minute read):

December 27, 2024

Eternity captured in a split second: the eidetic afterlife hypothesis

By Filip Drača

Almost every human being has some idea of what awaits us after death. Some expect a rebirth caused by karmic burdens, others might believe in a bodily resurrection when the messianic age arrives, and the modern irreligious person might believe that after death there follows a nothingness in which consciousness and thought are no longer present. But J. Martin Strangeweather asks a question that provokes an exploration of the relationship between the dying and dead brain and the experience of time: why do we assume that we will ever (emphasis on ever) reach any kind of 'other side'? It is possible that the sense of time passing will not only be drastically slowed in the final stages of dying, but frozen altogether—suspending us forever in timeless dreams and visions.

We may believe or think that after death we will pass into a new form of conscious and living existence, or perhaps that there is nothing after death—but what if, quite literally, we never die? That is, we will die for others, who will be able to watch us disintegrate into inorganic matter if they wish – but our personal sense of our own existence may never disappear. Was there a clearly identifiable point in time when life began? One need only look at any legalistic argument about abortion to see that such a question has no definitive answer. It is possible, as far as death is concerned, that not only is there no equivalent gradual transition from one state to another—but there is no transition to some fundamentally different state at all.

It is known in neuroscience that in dying brains, a sudden increase in activity is recorded in the final minutes or seconds before clinical death. The dying person is often unconscious, so it is speculated that we experience some intense dreams immediately before death. We also know that in dreams we do not have the same perception of time as in the waking state; a dream that "objectively" lasted about twenty minutes could have lasted for months or years, or perhaps even entire centuries of life, for the dreamer himself. Based on all this, a hypothesis is already developing about a pre-death "afterlife" as a final private experience that could subjectively last much longer than the seconds or minutes of increased brain activity that machines can measure.

The claims in Strangeweather's book Eidetic Afterlife Hypothesis (hereinafter: EAH) partly build on these already known insights, but also differ from them in some significant ways that we will highlight. We have already presented one: namely, it is possible that there is nothing final in that last dream and that the state of afterlife (however we understand it, even if it is a complete cessation of consciousness and thought) will never actually come. The book is not really about neuroscience, although it uses it, but about time. In addition, the text explores some other philosophical implications of such an understanding of our infinite pre-death existence: if we die only for others, then death is social and cannot be viewed from any other perspective. EAH also explores, at least superficially, some of the ethical and political implications that such a model of dying-without-death brings. It also enters into the phenomenology of time and treats time primarily as an experience mediated by the state of one's own body; This is not in itself a new perspective on the understanding of time, but an interesting contribution to the topic is that

Strangeweather is interested not only in the experience of time that a dying body has, but also in the clinically dead body. Let's take a look at some of the details.

Strangeweather's EAH builds significantly on some of the experiments already conducted on dying people, and on various hypotheses about the experience of dying that have been put forward over the past few decades. It is not a complete synthesis of these insights, but it would be useful to provide a brief overview of the knowledge gained so far.

In 1930, neuroscientist Hudson Hoagland discovered that the experience of time can be modified by changes in body temperature, stress, and reduced oxygen supply to the brain. The latter also causes various internal perceptions, such as hallucinations. In 1968, British parapsychologist Celia Green conducted research on out-of-body experiences and put forward certain theories about the phenomenon of lucid dreams. In 1975, psychiatrist and philosopher Raymond Moody published a study on near-death experiences, and is the author of the term. In the early 21st century, the DMT model of near-death dreams and visions was developed, which attempts to explain near-death experiences by the explosion of a cocktail of chemicals that are normally involved in dreaming.

Some of the known effects of DMT are an unusual stretching of the experience of time and visual, auditory and even tactile and proprioceptive hallucinations. The DMT model is a theory of the "afterlife" that claims that in the last moments of brain activity we experience intense dreams that can subjectively last much longer than those same seconds were perceived by others. In 2001, the so-called ketamine model was published to explain the hallucinations and visions associated with near-death experiences, thanks to the fact that ketamine can induce psychic phenomena that strongly resemble descriptions of near-death experiences even in people who were not dying at that moment.

Martin Strangeweather builds EAH on this foundation, most notably by synthesizing the DMT and ketamine model of near-death experiences to hypothesize the afterlife as an experience of atemporality that occurs immediately before death, with the addition that it is not just an extremely extended experience that nevertheless has an end. The DMT and ketamine models do not go beyond positing near-death dreams that subjectively could last for years; they are nevertheless limited and are followed by the afterlife or unconscious nothingness, depending on our religious positions. EAH takes a further step and asks: what if, for the dying person, this final state of dreaming never actually ends?

What if we never cross over to any ‘other side’, not even one where we experience a complete cessation of conscious existence? Not only might there be no afterlife, but it’s possible that death, if we think of it as the end of earthly existence, doesn’t actually exist. The end won’t actually come, Strangeweather suggests.

In a study conducted from 1984 to 1986, eleven dying patients showed electroencephalographic activity for a long time after they were officially declared brain dead. Two patients showed EEG activity for 72 hours after clinical death. The remaining two had some traces of brain activity for 168 hours, or 7 days, after death. One of them even showed alpha waves for three hours after death, meaning that his brain was actually in the same state that we call wakefulness in the

living. Strangeweather points out that all eleven were definitely dead, at least as medical science understands the condition. The two patients whose brains were active for 7 days did not spend that time dying, but were truly dead.

The 2001 study "Progenitor Cells from a Human Brain After Death" shows that brain cells are much more durable than previously thought, revealing that they continue to grow and differentiate from each other hours after death. According to the DMT and ketamine models, dying people experience an explosion of brain activity immediately before clinical death, which from our perspective lasts seconds or minutes at most.

This is, of course, only what we, who are still alive, can see and measure with machines and clocks. What is recorded is brain activity that seems to us to extend over hours, days, and weeks. But our waking and living experience of time is, Strangeweather argues, completely and exhaustively mediated by various bodily factors, many of which are never the subject of conscious thought. We can only claim from our experience of time, which is as subjective as that of the deceased, that life ends at a specific moment. But what is "our" experience of time and what does it consist of?

The aforementioned neurologist Hudson Hoagland pointed out that in addition to the time that is conditioned by position and movement, there is also a time that is immanent to every conscious individual, completely private and impossible to objectify and measure: introceptive temporality or psychophysiological time. This is the feeling of time passing that is conditioned by a) various physiological factors, such as body temperature or oxygen flow to the brain; according to this hypothesis, time passes faster for older people because their bodies become less efficient in their use of oxygen, b) various psychological states—stress, the amount of stimulating things or activities around us, familiar or unfamiliar situations, and so on. In addition, the conscious and awake experience of time has as its frame of reference the duration of various bodily actions: how long it takes us to walk a certain distance, how long it takes to eat a meal, how long a sexual intercourse lasted, and so on. The passage of time in the waking state is mediated by our perception of our body as placed in relation to other bodies, but in the dreaming state we have neither a perception of our body nor of any external world made up of other bodies.

We can be sure that even before death—sometimes days or weeks before—any capacity for external perception ceases. Similar to when we dream, we lose the perception of our own body within the world of other bodies. The state that normally shapes our experience of time is taken away from us. What remains is time, which is determined by the physiological processes of the dying body, including altered oxygen utilization, DMT and ketamine, and by the unknown psychic processes that a dying or already dead person goes through. We cannot know how long the last minutes of intense brain activity last for the deceased immediately before death, or the aforementioned brain activities that last for days after clinical death; we can only be sure that time without conscious perception of our own body must pass at a different pace. The processes that we observe from the outside and that last for us in minutes, hours or days are not 'objectively' that long, since the perception of time that the living have is just as contingent as the perception that the dead have.

Building on these facts, Strangeweather posits EAH as follows: just before and at the moment of death, the experience of time will be significantly slowed down. We will experience non-linear dreams and visions in which our entire past will be mixed with various fantasies, without a logical temporal sequence (the very distinction between imagination and memory will be erased). These dreams will probably last for many years, perhaps even centuries—and these periods will be no less real to us than the perception of time that the living people around us will have. After some ‘time’ (conditionally speaking) has passed, we enter a state that is practically timeless; we will be permanently suspended in some kind of final vision. Nothing will follow after that. The sense of our own existence will not disappear, although it is possible that we will reach ‘ego death’ and that much of what we consider essential components of our personality will be forgotten. And, of course, it would be paradoxical to claim that ‘after’ this phase there will be anything; It cannot happen that our immortal soul exceeds this stage and passes into heaven or hell, nor can there be a complete cessation of psychic life.

One might object to this, that brains do not last forever, that we can see them eventually disintegrate and cease to exist. Even before that point, the brain ceases to have any activity that is currently available to science, however true it may be that these activities continue long after clinical death. The deceased's self, or at least that part of that self that depends on the organs, must at some point disappear. We could argue, as many have done, against the mechanistic conception of the self and deny that it is reducible to the brain; but this book presents a more interesting alternative.

Namely, the complete decomposition of the brain is an event within our experience of time, which is shaped by such and such psychophysiological processes already enumerated. But Strangeweather tries to convince us of a temporal relativism in which a) there are other psychophysiological states with their own experience of time, b) no psychophysiological state has a truer perception of time than any other. Of course, the brain of a man who died and decomposed 3000 years ago no longer exists for us, but that man could still be real to himself for 3000 years.

Let us outline some practical implications of Strangeweather's EAH. We have some new idea of a timeless and conscious existence that does not come after death, but is explicitly equated with it. Let us outline some ethical conclusions that follow from it.

1. The eidetic afterlife is built from the experiences (both internal and external) gained during life. The world that awaits us after death is this very world, in terms of content as we have experienced it. This is a great burden on the present moment, because it gives it a place in the potentially eternal experience that is to come; do we want the present moment to be included? There are probably almost always experiences that we would rather have had instead of the present. Everyone is in part the author of their own afterlife, and the afterlife is someone's lifelong magnum opus. This must be a frightening thought for anyone who has spent a significant portion of their life in a boring job, or in an unhappy marriage.

2. It is possible to spoil the afterlife of others by causing suffering of any kind. By traumatizing others, we are not just causing temporary psychological damage, or even “just” lifelong damage—we are literally damaging their eternal existence and ensuring that their afterlife will be

at least partly a nightmare. Perhaps even a nightmare that will subjectively last for hundreds of years. We will all appear in someone's afterlife, as we were experienced.

3. The eidetic afterlife depends on specific physiological processes within the dying body. These processes take time to actualize. It is then theoretically possible to deprive someone of their afterlife by a sufficiently rapid method of killing. Brain injuries, for example, if they hit certain vital points, can deprive a person of their ultimate experience of eternity. People who were reduced to dust in a split second during the bombing of Hiroshima or Nagasaki probably did not get the time needed for the body to summon eternity.

4. We will be rewarded or punished according to our own unresolved guilt. To use Strangeweather's example, Nazi criminals probably suffered for their actions because they knew full well that a significant portion of the world considered them monstrous, and many were ashamed. But there is no such guarantee that anyone who has inflicted any kind of pain on others will go through their own personal hell, because it requires the capacity for self-doubt and guilt. The eidetic afterlife is ours, and we are our own punishers in it; we will only suffer if we already think we deserve it.

5. Every form of afterlife offered by any religion is true for those people who believed in it during their lifetime. The Greek pagan finds himself in the Elysian Fields, the Christian goes to the heavenly Jerusalem (if he is convinced that he has earned it), and so on. People who have converted and changed their beliefs about afterlife throughout their lives could end up with a jumble of different models. Ironically, the only complete denial of an afterlife that a modern atheist could posit is false—the state of complete cessation of one's own existence will never come, because dying is relative.

J. Martin Strangeweather's thesis can be summarized in a few points:

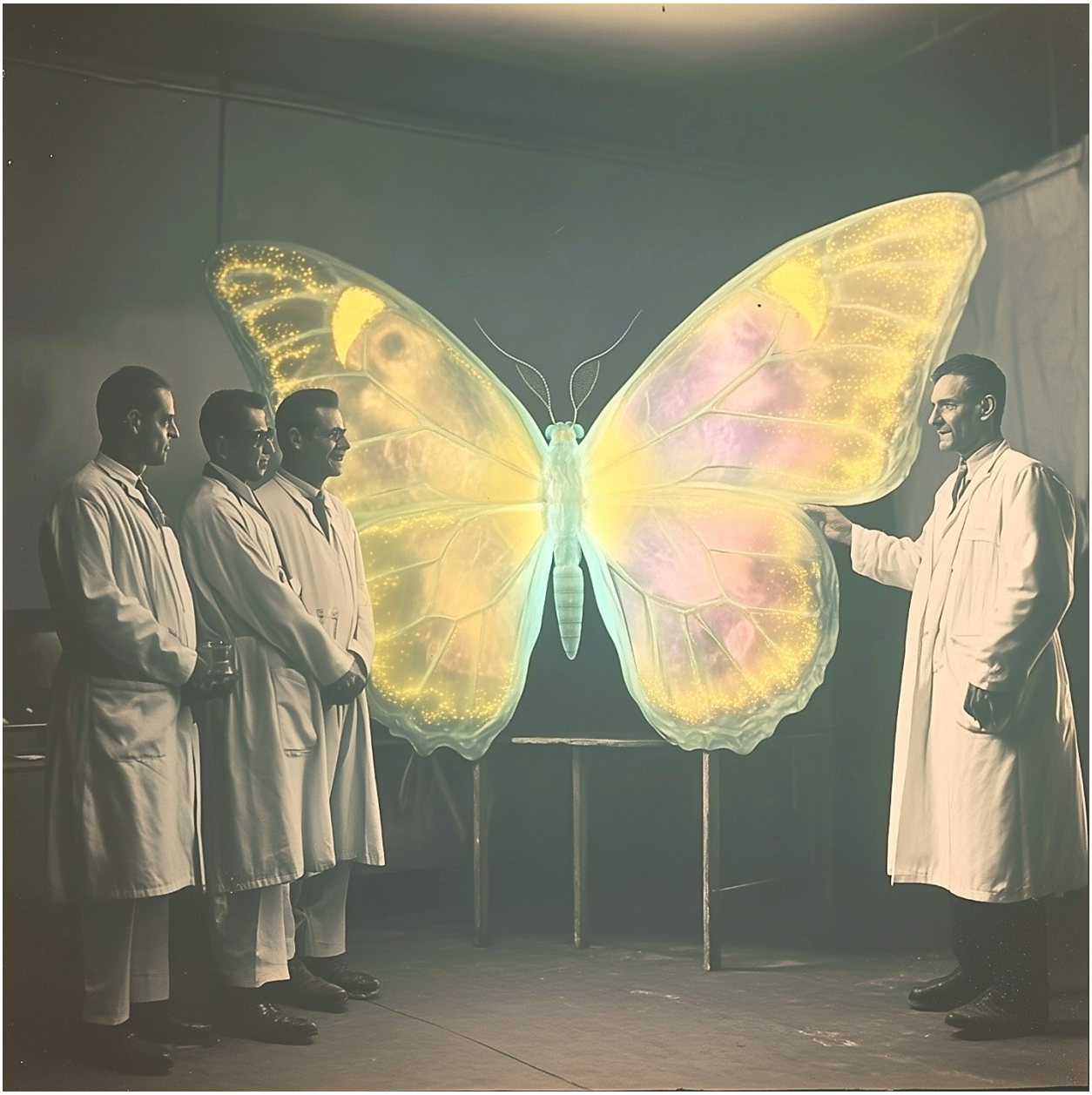
First, time is an experience mediated by the state of the body, and the speed of its passage is subject to psychophysical changes within the organism. Furthermore, just before so-called death we pass through a state in which we are no longer aware of our body and its various relations with other bodies, but this does not mean the cessation of consciousness since it is possible to think and experience without external relations—and this drastically affects the experience of time. Not only is the dying brain extremely active—which is now well known—but we have reason to believe that the officially dead brain is also active, which suggests that medicine currently does not have an adequate concept of death.

If we understand death as any transition to some ontologically different state, then death does not actually exist for the dead themselves, which actually makes it a social convention; we are dead when our way of life has become different from that of others around us, and they interpret this difference as absence and mistakenly believe that we are no longer alive. Death and the afterlife are actually one and the same, infinitesimally small moment—perhaps stretched into timelessness. The afterlife will be made up of our own experiences and actions, lived and undertaken during life, which places a great responsibility on us towards our atemporal existence; a great many people will have boring afterlives, or lives filled with regrets and guilt, if they do not start doing something immediately. We must live authentically now precisely so that

we can live like this in the infinite future—those who sacrifice for the future ensure for themselves only infinite future sacrifice.

Link to the original article:

https://ideje.hr/vjecnost-zarobljena-u-djelicu-sekunde-eideticka-hipoteza-zivota-nakon-smrti/?fbclid=IwY2xjawP_WAFleHRuA2FlbQIxMABicmlkETA2V3oxZ2JmMnBQcXhIZmxTc3J0YwZhcHBfaWQQMjIyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg5MgABHgBN9M7Nan8zDW9qHnFQM17Snac-ADO_4JhOaDNELt0y7QBkEC7P0O7GM8Vk_aem_v4QgrFfbQpsBaQhcS0bPpA



H.A.D.E.S. versus N.E.P.T.U.N.E.

Posted to Facebook on April 11, 2025

Some researchers recently came out with a "new" theory on death and dying. Upon examining their theory, I recognized numerous core components that have already been established by my own research, some of which dates back to 2004. To their credit, the authors of this "new" theory have gathered a wide body of empirical data; however, their interpretation falls short of truly grasping the *experiential totality* of the dying process. The name of their model is the Neurophysiological Evolutionary Psychological Theory Understanding Near-death Experience, or the N.E.P.T.U.N.E. theory, which they claim is "a comprehensive model that includes and extends previously suggested theories." That's one of the clunkiest acronyms I've ever heard, and Neptune is the god of the sea, not the underworld, so the name doesn't even apply to their death-related theory. In honor of their lack of imagination, I have decided to rename my hypothesis. Henceforth, the eidetic afterlife hypothesis shall also be known as the Hyper-Accelerated Dream of Eternity Syndrome, or the H.A.D.E.S. hypothesis.

The N.E.P.T.U.N.E. theory is very much like the H.A.D.E.S. hypothesis, except N.E.P.T.U.N.E. misses at least 25% of what's really happening during the dying brain process, not to mention the fact that their "new" theory came out almost a year and a half ***after*** I published nearly identical research, though our styles of presenting information are as different as night and day. Their theory is dense with technical language meant to be read by specialists, whereas I wrote my hypothesis to be accessible to the general public.

There is nothing original about the N.E.P.T.U.N.E. theory, at least nothing of significance that the H.A.D.E.S. hypothesis hasn't already covered more thoroughly:

1. The N.E.P.T.U.N.E. theory discusses the role of various neurochemicals in the dying brain process. The H.A.D.E.S. hypothesis also discusses the role of those exact same neurochemicals in the dying brain process, but in much greater depth [1].

2. The N.E.P.T.U.N.E. theory discusses the restriction of oxygen to the brain and its relation to the near-death experience. The H.A.D.E.S. hypothesis also discusses the restriction of oxygen to the brain and its relation to the near-death experience, but in much greater depth [2].

3. And finally, the N.E.P.T.U.N.E. theory discusses the hyper-synaptic activity recorded during the dying brain process. The H.A.D.E.S. hypothesis also discusses the hyper-synaptic activity recorded during the dying brain process, but again, the H.A.D.E.S. hypothesis goes into much greater detail regarding this subject [3][4].

4. The N.E.P.T.U.N.E. theory was published on March 31, 2025. The H.A.D.E.S. hypothesis was published on **January 12, 2024**, although the core ideas were originally published in 2004.

[1] See **Notes Concerning Eternity, part ten: A Psychopharmacological Explanation for the Manifestation of the Eidetic Afterlife During the Dying Brain Process**

[2] See **Notes Concerning Eternity, part three: Oxygen Deprivation and the Dying Brain Process**

[3] See **Notes Concerning Eternity, part four: The Light that Shines Within**

[4] See **Notes Concerning Eternity, part nine: A Neurocellular Explanation for the Manifestation of the Eidetic Afterlife During the Dying Brain Process**

And that's where the N.E.P.T.U.N.E. theory leaves off, failing altogether to address a major aspect of the near-death experience (NDE): temporal dilation, timelessness, the experience of eternity. Without this aspect, N.E.P.T.U.N.E. is just another chemical theory of NDEs that ultimately discredits the afterlife as a mere hallucination or augmented dream state. N.E.P.T.U.N.E. simply doesn't possess the explanatory power of H.A.D.E.S. To treat NDEs merely as a cascade of neurochemical and synaptic phenomena is to miss the forest for the trees. The subjective experience of temporal dilation is no trivial detail—it's central to what makes the NDE a profound and often life-altering encounter, and is of primary importance to the experience of any sort of afterlife. The H.A.D.E.S. hypothesis not only incorporates this dimension, it provides a neuropsychological and phenomenological framework for understanding it [5][6].

Bottom line, all the N.E.P.T.U.N.E. research team did was gather and correlate the research of other researchers, same as me, *except I published my research a year before them!* But I'm encouraged by their theory, since it provides further validation for my own.

[5] See **Notes Concerning Eternity, part five: The Phenomenology of Time Travel During the Dying Brain Process**

[6] See **Notes Concerning Eternity, part six: The Physiology of Temporal Perception and Distortion During the Dying Brain Process**

While the N.E.P.T.U.N.E. theory offers straightforward neurobiological explanations for certain aspects of NDEs, its framework does not directly address the phenomenon of temporal dilation, which means it only covers 75% of the NDE compared to the H.A.D.E.S. hypothesis. Superficial clues of altered time perception might be inferred by N.E.P.T.U.N.E. (e.g., how the brain reacts to extremely stressful conditions), but the theory doesn't go into depth about the mechanics of temporal expansion or contraction during the dying brain process. The N.E.P.T.U.N.E. theory, by omitting this fourth category of exploration, remains incomplete. It attempts to explain the theater of the dying mind without acknowledging the stage on which the drama unfolds—*time itself*. The H.A.D.E.S. hypothesis, being more philosophical and psychological (while also drawing heavily upon *the exact same neurobiological research* as the N.E.P.T.U.N.E. theory), allows for a much broader exploration of temporal distortion and its related effects (e.g., the "life review" reported by many experiencers) during the NDE [7]. The afterlife—whether real or perceived—is too vast, too intimate, and too important to be flattened into chemicals and nerves alone. The H.A.D.E.S. hypothesis offers not just a map of the neural landscape, but a compass for the experiential journey.

[7] See **Notes Concerning Eternity, part eighteen: Life Review and the Temporal Compression of Memories During the Dying Brain Process**

In conclusion, the N.E.P.T.U.N.E. theory merely restates much of the research and findings originally theorized by the H.A.D.E.S. hypothesis, while failing to address one of four key elements of NDEs and the afterlife experience in general.

On a related note, the N.E.P.T.U.N.E. theory includes a timeline of NDE-related breakthroughs, which yet again is sorely lacking compared to the timeline of thanatology included in the H.A.D.E.S. hypothesis [8].

[8] See **Notes Concerning Eternity, part one: A Brief History of Thanatology**

In the spirit of fellowship, rather than considering the N.E.P.T.U.N.E. theory any sort of competition or rival, I have decided to send the N.E.P.T.U.N.E. research team my notes concerning the mechanics and effects of temporal dilation during the dying brain process, although I suspect they are already somewhat familiar with my work (since I have freely shared my research with the public, including many of the world's leading thanatologists), and it wouldn't surprise me if they modified or added another feature to their theory in the near future, expanding it beyond reductionist frameworks toward a more complete understanding of the dying process and its accompanying experience.

Voyage LA

Life & Work with J. Martin Strangeweather

April 14, 2025

Today we're excited to be connecting with J. Martin Strangeweather again. If you haven't already, we suggest you check out our prior conversation with them here.

J. Martin, thanks for joining us again. Just to level set a bit for folks who may have missed our last interview together, can you briefly introduce yourself?

In January of 2024 I published a small book introducing a new way of understanding death and the dying process: The Eidetic Afterlife Hypothesis. The eidetic afterlife hypothesis embraces the logic and methodologies of science but also respects the wisdom and insights of religious traditions. The eidetic afterlife hypothesis isn't trying to put religion out of business, despite what my critics say. It's trying to gather all of this related yet seemingly contradictory metaphysical and scientific data and make sense of it. I have endeavored to explain the afterlife experience in terms of psychological, phenomenological, neurobiological, and even quantum mechanical processes without diminishing its spiritual dimension. You can currently read my book for free online at The Internet Archive (link below) and on the Near-Death Experience Research Foundation's website. You can also purchase a hardcopy version of The Eidetic Afterlife Hypothesis at Barnes & Noble and wherever else books are sold. But honestly, this project was never about making money, which is why I've made the information freely available through several sites.

The eidetic afterlife hypothesis is the only scientific model of death that allows for the possibility of a seemingly eternal afterlife, which arises from a "perfect storm" of factors that occur during the dying brain process, such as the restriction of oxygen to the brain, the flooding of neurochemicals associated with memories and dreams and hallucinations, a massive surge of synaptic excitation (indicating a heightened state of mental activity), and the shutdown of various centers of the brain responsible for our sense of the passage of time. The eidetic afterlife hypothesis adds a relativistic twist to the age-old understanding of the hereafter: your experience of eternity is conjured in the moment just before you actually die, not afterward!

Awesome, so we reached out because we wanted to hear all about what you have been up to since we last connected.

Thanatologists (researchers of death and dying) worldwide have taken notice of my hypothesis. Buddhists and Hindus are embracing it. Christians and Jews are embracing it. Even atheists are drawn to its unique take on the afterlife. But just to be clear, this isn't a religion. It's a plausible explanation for a mysterious and wondrous experience acknowledged by almost all spiritual institutions, each in their own manner. Not only does the eidetic afterlife hypothesis account for every near-death experience ever described, it also provides a reasonable explanation for the phenomenon known as terminal lucidity.

I created a page on Facebook (link below) devoted to exploring different facets of the hypothesis more in depth. Why Facebook? Because ordinary folk would probably never get a chance to read it otherwise. Facebook is currently the largest public platform in the world. I want the hypothesis to be easily accessible, not hidden behind a paywall or barcode, and people from all walks of life spend a lot of time on social media.

When you look back on your life, what are three things you expect to be proud of?

I'm no seventh son of a seventh son. I don't come from a line of geniuses or gurus or any other noteworthy lineages. I didn't go to any fancy private schools. My family was middle class on the poorer side of the spectrum. I've never had a near-death experience, or encountered a UFO. But I've had a rebellious streak in me ever since I can remember, coupled with a fiery imagination. And I've always been keenly interested in philosophy. Once in a while someone will ask me what's with the name Strangeweather. I just tell them, "Sometimes you choose the role, and sometimes the role chooses you."

Whenever I reflect upon my life and the decisions I've made, I don't feel particularly proud of anything I've accomplished, though I've accomplished many things (I'm merely a link in the chain, a step in the staircase), but I do feel grateful… grateful for being born in the right place at the right time to experience the things I've experienced, all the highs and lows, all the mysteries and wonders. If I had to say I'm proud of something, I guess it would be that I never let fear guide my decisions.

Link to the original article:

https://voyagela.com/interview/life-work-with-j-martin-strangeweather/?fbclid=IwY2xjawP_T8xleHRuA2FlbQIxMABicmlkETA2V3oxZ2JmMnBQcXhIZmxTc3J0YwZhcHBfaWQQMjIyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg5MgABHsGbF7E1DFULJTzapdk9FwqH0QY6LYHvFOgMv9urUpB5V7M4J88VtJQRQi2z_aem_I3Su_Z8lWeiM67ISLyz3ng

A Message from J. Martin Strangeweather

Posted to Facebook on June 13, 2025

I've received some very encouraging feedback regarding the Eidetic Afterlife Hypothesis. Dr. Susan Blackmore, one of the world's leading researchers of consciousness and near-death experiences (NDEs), wrote to me: "I think you are exactly right about the usual structure of time breaking down and giving rise to these 'timeless' experiences. Like you, I think the imbalance between excitation and inhibition is the root cause of most (all?) aspects of NDEs and we do not need any heavenly explanation."

P.M.H. Atwater, one of the original researchers in the field of near-death studies, thanked me for sharing my "detailed ideas about the dying brain process" and said the Eidetic Afterlife Hypothesis "is indeed interesting." Jody Long, author and webmaster of the Near-Death Experience Research Foundation, also said my hypothesis is, "Interesting. You have many ideas to think about." NDE researcher Bryon Ehlmann said, "We are on a similar trajectory of research. However, my research is basically over except for analyzing other theories on death and the afterlife (like yours)."

The Eidetic Afterlife Hypothesis has also been met with hostility by a handful of NDE researchers, the type who claim to be openminded until their beliefs are actually challenged, those who pursue the truth so long as it fits their narrative. But this is to be expected. A large percentage of NDE researchers are merely trying to find scientific validation for their spiritual beliefs. Accounts of NDEs and OBEs, even when corroborated, do not equal irrefutable proof of an immortal spirit that can exist without a physical body. There are many other ways to interpret such phenomena.

One detractor said my hypothesis was a "mishmash of Buddism [sic], Hinduism, Egyptian and modern materialism" which can only mean he didn't understand the material he was reading. He goes on to provide a reductive summary of the hypothesis: "The brain releases chemicals which causes you to hallucinate an eternal experience by dilating time which really doesn't exist as you make up deities which really don't exist as you ultimately go into eternal oblivion which isn't real to you in your eternal hallucination of time upon your death!" The only part he got right was "the brain releases chemicals." Sometimes people willfully misunderstand or trivialize whatever (or whomever) they wish to dismiss.

Another detractor, whose work is far more fringy than mine, agrees with my hypothesis so much that he implied I must have plagiarized his ideas. The only problem with his contention is that his afterlife model involves reliving one's life again and again until attaining perfection, and higher-dimensional guardian angels called daemons who possess knowledge of the future, and remembering truths from other lifetimes, and the Akashic Records! Needless to say, this is nothing like my own hypothesis. The Eidetic Afterlife Hypothesis avoids such overtly metaphysical claims and crutches.

Consciousness (whatever this term means) may very well continue after the death of the body, but it would be nothing like the version of consciousness you are experiencing right now reading this sentence.

Voyage LA

Life, Values & Legacy:

Our Chat with J. Martin Strangeweather

September 15, 2025

J. Martin Strangeweather shared their story and experiences with us recently and you can find our conversation below.

J. Martin, so good to connect and we're excited to share your story and insights with our audience. There's a ton to learn from your story, but let's start with a warm up before we get into the heart of the interview. Are you walking a path—or wandering?

I've definitely been walking a path these last few years, more like blazing a trail through uncharted territory, namely the afterlife. Researching the dying brain process and publishing my findings in a book titled "The Eidetic Afterlife Hypothesis" and a monthly online series of death-related explorations called "Notes Concerning Eternity" has inadvertently cast me in the role of a modern-day psychopomp. A psychopomp, in classical mythology and spirituality, is any figure who guides souls to the land of the dead. By examining the psychological, phenomenological, and neurophysiological mechanics underlying such near-death phenomena as temporal dilation, out-of-body experiences, life reviews, reuniting with the deceased, and encountering the divine light, the eidetic afterlife hypothesis (along with the Notes Concerning Eternity) effectively maps out the mysterious experience of dying. I'm not claiming the eidetic afterlife hypothesis is absolutely correct (increasingly better research tools will provide increasingly better findings), but right now it provides the most plausible explanations for every consistently recurring phenomenon associated with near-death experiences and descriptions of the hereafter.

Can you briefly introduce yourself and share what makes you or your brand unique?

I'm J. Martin Strangeweather, a poet, novelist, artist, teacher, philosopher, and thanatologist (a researcher of death and dying). I'm the founder and Chief Executive Prognosticator of the Santa Ana Literary Association. I'm also the originator of the literary genre known as "mediatized realism." Google "Poems from the Mediatized Soulscape" if you'd like to learn more about mediatized realism. Currently I'm attempting to bridge the gap between science and spirituality with my eidetic afterlife hypothesis (link below).

Okay, so here's a deep one: What relationship most shaped how you see yourself?

I've been educated by world-famous physicists, philosophers, and authors, but I'd have to say the person who has taught me the most about myself is Mary Rose, my sunshine on a cloudy day, my pirate queen, and my groundedness. Relationships aren't easy, they expose who you really are–the good, the bad, and the downright ugly–but Mary and I make a good team. We've been adventuring together for 32 years. During that time we've explored 54 countries, setting foot on every continent except Antarctica! Mary Rose is a floral designer who has worked on a bunch of really cool projects, including the award-winning "Festival of Lights" Christmas display at the

historic Mission Inn, and the highly acclaimed “Fleur de Ville” floral art show at South Coast Plaza.

What did suffering teach you that success never could?

That’s easy: empathy and compassion. Suffering also taught me to be grateful, and to persevere. I’ve studied quantum mechanics under renowned theoretical physicists and debated philosophy with Buddhist monks in Tibet, traveling around the globe in pursuit of knowledge, and the most important thing I’ve learned is this: the world would be a better place if we all just tried to be a little kinder, a little more patient, and a little more forgiving.

Next, maybe we can discuss some of your foundational philosophies and views? Is the public version of you the real you?

Of course not. I’m not even sure there is a real me, or maybe I should say the real me is a collection of recurring roles that are liable to change from minute to minute and decade to decade. Some roles are useful for certain situations, while other roles are useful for other situations, and sometimes we just outgrow a role and replace it with a different one. But I suppose there is a “real” me. Would you like to know who I really am? I am every word, thought, and deed that has ever issued from me. I am every penny I have ever spent. I am the truth behind every lie I have ever told. And so are you.

Before we go, we’d love to hear your thoughts on some longer-run, legacy type questions. What do you think people will most misunderstand about your legacy?

Most people will misunderstand the eidetic afterlife hypothesis, arguably my most ambitious contribution to the ongoing chronicles of humanity. But I’m okay with that. All great works get misunderstood. Whether you are a theist, an atheist, or agnostic, the eidetic afterlife hypothesis will challenge your belief system. It’s very punk in that sense. I didn’t write the hypothesis to replace religion (I don’t have the time or inclination to be a cult leader), and I certainly didn’t write it to get rich (you can read it for free on the Near-Death Experience Research Foundation’s website, The Internet Archive, Facebook, and several other online avenues). I wrote it because somebody had to, and my interdisciplinary studies (philosophy + psychology + theoretical physics + comparative religion + world mythology) made me the perfect candidate for the job.

Link to the original article:

https://voyagela.com/interview/life-values-legacy-our-chat-with-j-martin-strangeweather-of-downtown-highlight?fbclid=IwY2xjawP_UGRleHRuA2FlbQIxMABicmlkETA2V3oxZ2JmMnBQcXhIZm

xTc3J0YwZhcHBfaWQQMjIyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg5MgABHovhH8LWWra4t9HIi4GfBlEU
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BOLD JOURNEY

Meet J. Martin Strangeweather

September 29, 2025

We're excited to introduce you to the always interesting and insightful J. Martin Strangeweather. We hope you'll enjoy our conversation with J. Martin below.

Hi J. Martin , so happy you were able to devote some time to sharing your thoughts and wisdom with our community. So, we've always admired how you have seemingly never let nay-sayers or haters keep you down. Can you talk to us about how to persist despite the negative energy that so often is thrown at folks trying to do something special with their lives?

Never let the naysayers get a foothold inside your head, but never pass up constructive criticism, either. Listen to people who have your best interests in mind. Don't waste your valuable time and energy on people who just want to tear you down. If you're doing something that hasn't been done before, you're going to have naysayers. If you're doing something important, you're going to have naysayers. If you're doing something noticeably better than others in your profession, you're going to have naysayers. Sometimes people are afraid your mere presence is going to overshadow them, and sometimes they're afraid your light is going to expose what they've been hiding in the shadows, and sometimes they're just jealous. Be a Mozart, not a Salieri.

Great, so let's take a few minutes and cover your story. What should folks know about you and what you do?

In the art world I'm the originator of a hallucinatory painting style called the "chaos method." In the literary world I'm the founder of the Santa Ana Literary Association and the originator of a thought-provoking genre called "mediatized realism." And in the world of philosophy and religion I'm the originator of the highly unorthodox "eidetic afterlife hypothesis." Speaking of the eidetic afterlife hypothesis, I recently released a supplement to it. The supplement is titled Notes Concerning Eternity and it's twice as long as The Eidetic Afterlife Hypothesis. Both books are available to read for free on The Internet Archive (see link below).

Each section of the Notes Concerning Eternity explores a different aspect of the eidetic afterlife hypothesis, but more thoroughly than the original work, which was really an introduction to the concept of subjective, neurobiological, relativistic eternity. Chapters for the notes have titles such as "The Phenomenology of Time Travel During the Dying Brain Process" and "The Psychological Mechanics of Heaven" and "The Psychophysiology of Out-of-Body Experiences". It's heady stuff, but I made an effort to write about these subjects in a manner that would be comprehensible to non-academic readers.

If you had to pick three qualities that are most important to develop, which three would you say matter most?

Let’s see, three qualities, skills, or areas of knowledge that were impactful in my journey:

1. Most children are extremely imaginative and creative and curious about the world. I was the same, except I never grew out of it.

2. Learning to think critically and philosophically at a young age made me who I am today. It’s too bad we don’t teach critical thinking in high school. It sure would help prepare kids for whatever comes next in their life.

3. I’ve always felt that getting the chance to experience this miraculous planet is the most precious gift we’ll ever receive. Don’t squander your days chasing factory-made dreams. Don’t take the wonder of existence for granted.

Here’s my advice: Don’t fake it till you make it. Start humble. Do your homework. Do your research. Put in the hours. Put in the effort. Be passionate about what you do. Be honest with yourself and others. The world has enough phonies.

How would you spend the next decade if you somehow knew that it was your last?

I would travel, and go to concerts, and read important works of literature, and spend my days thinking and writing (maybe even publishing something from time to time), and I would create art, and teach people, and help people, and try to make the world a better place, just like I’ve been doing for the past two decades!

Link to the original article:

https://boldjourney.com/meet-j-martin-strangeweather-2/

Posted to Facebook on December 7, 2025

Emotional Manipulation and Logical Fallacies in Thanatological Discourse

By J. Martin Strangeweather

The most famous spokesperson for the life-after-death argument is arguably Dr. Raymond Moody who popularized the subject of near-death experiences in 1975 with the publication of his book *Life After Life*. Rather than explore Dr. Moody's concept of life after death, which is fairly straightforward and mostly grounded in accounts of near-death experiences, I have decided to scrutinize the very words and strategies he uses to defend his stance, drawing upon his latest interview at the time of this writing: *What if our Minds Already Know About the Afterlife? Dr. Raymond Moody on Proving Life After Death*, which you can find on YouTube [see below]. The interview was conducted by Dani Foffa, Multimedia Director of the International Association for Near-Death Studies (IANDS), and took place on October 31st at the 2025 IANDS conference.

In this 25-minute interview Dr. Moody ridicules disbelievers of life after death 20 times, referring to critics of the disembodied afterlife as ignoramuses, crazy, morons (the most commonly used expression of derision in the interview, employing it 5 times), nincompoops, foolish, obnoxious, goofballs, irresponsible, adolescent, uneducated, and immature. Dr. Moody also commits the 10 most common logical fallacies throughout the interview: 1. Attacking the person rather than criticizing their argument (ad hominem). 2. Creating a distorted version of the opposing argument and then criticizing it (straw man). 3. Appealing to authority. 4. Taking an argument from a sensible premise to an unsensible conclusion (slippery slope). 5. Arguing that something is good because it is popular (bandwagon). 6. Implying an argument must be true if it cannot be proven false, or false if it cannot be proven true (appeal to ignorance). 7. Presenting an issue as having only two sides, when in fact there are other alternatives (false dilemma). 8. Overgeneralization, or making hasty conclusions based on insufficient evidence. 9. Redirecting the issue to a different, irrelevant topic (red herring). 10. Appealing to tradition. Rather than take my word for it, let's take the words of Dr. Moody himself:

At 1:51, Dr. Moody claims "One of the main questions they [the ancient Greek philosophers] were investigating was life after death." While Philosophers like Plato did discuss the concept of an afterlife and the immortality of the soul, the primary foci of ancient Greek philosophy were much broader, exploring fundamental questions of epistemology, ethics, and logic.

At 2:34, Dr. Moody says, "If someone brings up a real objection, then I will be moved closer to understanding the truth, but if there aren't any real objections then that gives me some degree of confidence that I'm on the right track, but not complete confidence." Dr. Moody emphasizes the word real both times in this sentence, which raises the question of what criteria he employs to determine if an objection is real or not. The reasoning here is circular: objections are only real to him if they coincide in some way with that which he has already accepted as real.

At 3:00, Dr. Moody employs an ethos-based strategy: "I know all of the classical objections. I've studied philosophy since I was 18 years old."

At 3:12, Dr. Moody says, “To call life after death a scientific question in 2025 sounds nice because people like that word *science* but it has no cognitive content.” He never explains why the scientific position has no cognitive content, and I can confidently say that no one who calls life after death a scientific question does so because they like the word *science*. His statement is condescendingly dismissive of opposing views.

At 5:05, Dr. Moody claims, “Where we are now is that we're making sense of the notion of an afterlife in a whole new way because we have new logical techniques for us to analyze the concept more accurately.” Notice the use of we and us. This is an example of the bandwagon argument. He never explains what these “new logical techniques” are.

At 6:03, Dr. Moody commits the logical fallacy of appealing to authority, “...the personnel are divided into the doctors who study it and take it seriously, and then on the other hand the so-called skeptics.”

At 6:18, Dr. Moody makes the bold claim, “Well, the so-called skeptics, I could prove very quickly are ignoramuses.” Employing overgeneralizations and name-calling seems ill-fitting for someone with a PhD in philosophy and psychology.

At 6:38, Dr. Moody says, “I love to teach Greek philosophy, and when I get to Pyrrho, who was the founder of the skeptical movement, I have to undo the damage on my students minds that those utter morons have done.” This is an example of a red herring. He seems to be making an argument about the correct terminology one may use to identify themselves as a skeptic, which really isn't the issue here. The argument has shifted from the scientific questioning of life after death to the appropriate use of the word skeptic as an identifier.

At 6:55, Dr. Moody says, “They [the people who identify themselves a skeptics] have no idea what being a skeptic is... it's just a word to them which they have rallied around [note the hasty generalization], many of them are uneducated, they're entertainers, like magicians and so on who think they know everything.” This is an example of an ad hominem argument, attacking the education level of his critics rather than their specific arguments, and I’m sure there are just as many uneducated people who believe in life after death, if not significantly more.

At 9:20, Dr. Moody says, referring to modern-day skeptics “...the words that you hear from these utter morons, which they really are,” then in a mocking tone he portrays a modern-day skeptic, “I'm a skeptic about these near-death experiences. I think it's just the chemistry of the brain, which means I am a person who does not draw conclusions and my conclusion is that near-death experiences are the chemistry of the brain... that is a self-contradiction, and the main thing I want to say to these moron skeptics is read up a little bit [again equating skeptical with unknowledgeable]. It is a very adolescent mindset, many of them are very immature.”

Immaturity would be calling everyone who disagrees with your position on a complex subject a moron. This passage contains an example of a straw man argument. Moody seems to dismiss the numerous movements of skepticism since the passing of Pyrrho, speaking as if there is only one way to understand and practice skepticism. He believes "true" skeptics never draw conclusions, which seems to be the bulk of his argument. This is an example of a false dilemma, speaking as if there is only one conclusion to be drawn. Dr. Moody fails to distinguish the difference between scientific skepticism, which tends to involve exposing pseudoscience, and philosophical skepticism, which tends to involve suspending judgement, though not necessarily denying all truth.

At 10:15, Dr. Moody claims, "Humanism is a religion for people who want to be against religion, and about Pyrrho, none of them, I've asked a lot of them, is Pyrrho up here, they have no idea who I'm talking about, so what that means is they're ignoramuses." This is a blatant mischaracterization of humanists and oversimplification of humanism. And calling oneself a skeptic without knowing anything about Pyrrho does not make one an ignoramus. Most likely it just means one employs methodologies of modern-day scientific inquiry.

At 10:37, Dr. Moody says, "I love to teach about Pyrrho, and when I get to Pyrrho, these students they have no idea what the word [skepticism] means because of these magicians, very often uneducated magicians... there's a certain kind of obnoxious character that comes with that group, and they're very adolescent..." More ad hominem argumentation and overgeneralized discrimination.

At 11:17, Dr. Moody says, regarding people who call themselves skeptics without knowing the specific philosophy of Pyrrho: "...to approach a problem like life after death, without even knowing what the word [skeptic] means that you're using is irresponsible and crazy." It's also irresponsible to label everyone who differs from your understanding of skepticism as crazy.

At 12:05, Dr. Moody asserts, "My point here is that this is such a rich heritage [skepticism] and that these goofballs and morons who use often second-level scientists or engineers, entertainers, or just obnoxious people..." More ad hominem attacks. So far there hasn't been any mention of the "new logical techniques" that were alluded to earlier in the interview.

At 12:28, Dr. Moody makes an appeal to tradition: "Change your name [rather than call yourself a skeptic]. Don't complicate things for people who love to read Greek philosophy [by calling yourself a skeptic if you haven't read Pyrrho], you're foolish if you do that because these nice folks whose names you are taking in vain are a big part of the Western philosophical heritage, and it's only nincompoops who use a word when they don't know what it means."

At 13:08, Dr. Moody says, “I've loved Pyrrho since I was 18 years old, and to hear all these morons use the word [skepticism]... is crazy. And it's a great disservice to people who are genuinely interested in the intellectual life for those entertainers who are not educated, and second-level scientists to form an organization around a word that they don't even know what it means.” It would be helpful if Dr. Moody defined what constitutes a second-level scientist. The argument has moved into an emotional appeal, asking us to believe that calling oneself a skeptic without identifying as neo-pyrrhic is “a great disservice to people who are genuinely interested in the intellectual life.” A few minutes later, Dr. Moody says, in relation to religious people who think they have all the answers, “You know, I don't know much of anything.”

At this point the interviewer reminds the audience that Raymond Moody famously coined the phrase “near-death experience” in 1975, failing to mention that almost a century earlier, in 1896, Victor Egger coined the term “experience of imminent death” to describe life reviews, tunnels of light, time dilation, and other phenomena that climbers said they experienced during falls from great heights. What are we to make of this selective omission of information?

At 20:28, Dr. Moody claims, “In reality, Dani, you can't understand the notion of an afterlife till you understand the role it played in Greek philosophy because the system of reason and logic that you and I are using at this very moment was developed by Greek philosophers and one of the main questions they were testing it on was the question of life after death.” This is an example of a slippery slope argument, where the conclusion doesn’t follow from the premise. The “logic” of Dr. Moody’s statement goes something like this: if you want to understand the afterlife you must understand Greek philosophy because Greek philosophy underpins logic and logic is what we’re using now.

At 21:00, Dr. Moody says, “Whenever we start investigating the afterlife, we're reasoning in a circle, so you got to get out of that,” which sounds odd coming from a man who spent a significant portion of his life investigating the afterlife.

At 24:30, Dr. Moody makes an appeal to ignorance: “The logic of unintelligibility may very well give us rational proof of an afterlife.” Suffice it to say the short interview is rife with emotional manipulation and logical fallacies. Dr. Moody fails to provide any proof of life after death during this discussion, contrary to the title of the interview.

Foffa, Dani, interviewer. *What if our Minds Already Know About the Afterlife? Dr. Raymond Moody on Proving Life After Death*. International Association for Near-Death Studies (IANDS), 31 Oct. 2025. YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pb21SEZgXnY

Posted to Facebook on January 5, 2026

Nonlocal Consciousness, Narrative Epistemologies, and Intertextual Inheritance in Dan Brown's *The Secret of Secrets*

By J. Martin Strangeweather

Death plays an important role in most thrillers and mysteries, underpinning the plot and heightening tension. In Dan Brown's novel, *The Secret of Secrets* (Doubleday 2025), death itself becomes the main problem to solve. The book is categorized as a mystery thriller, though some might call it a techno-thriller for its reliance on science and technology to drive the plot. In addition to a series of murders, the real mystery of Brown's novel revolves around this question: What is consciousness? This paper examines key sections of the novel that develop thanatological and philosophical arguments about consciousness, revealing how Brown uses them to blur the boundary between empirical science and metaphysical speculation.

The novel features Brown's recurring protagonist, Robert Langdon, Professor of Religious Iconography and Symbology, partnered once again with Dr. Katherine Solomon, a noetic scientist who first appeared in *The Lost Symbol* (Doubleday, 2009). The name Katherine comes from the Greek word *katharos*, meaning "clear" or "pure," and Solomon was the fourth monarch of Israel, known for his esoteric knowledge and ability to bind demons to build his temple and serve him. In *The Secret of Secrets*, Dr. Solomon also possesses esoteric knowledge, dangerous and forbidden insights (at least according to the CIA) with which to establish a new mode of spirituality (read metaphorically as "build a new temple") based on her understanding of neuroscience and nonlocal consciousness. Nonlocal consciousness occupies a central position in the narrative, at times giving the impression that the novel itself functions primarily as a vehicle for exploring the concept and its spiritual and social ramifications. Just before the prologue, Brown presents us with three facts, the second of which states "All experiments, technologies, and scientific results [in the novel] are true to life." This paratextual framing collapses the boundary between fiction and reality while establishing the text's authority upfront, priming the reader to suspend disbelief in the novel's more speculative elements.

Narrating this story from the third-person omniscient perspective puts Brown himself in the role of narrative God, dispensing and withholding insights to heighten suspense, create tension, and lend weight to philosophical arguments as he sees fit. In the prologue, we open with a scene of science confronting spirituality (the novel's underlying theme) through a firsthand experience of dying, establishing the particular thanatological framework the text will explore. Dr. Brigita Gessner, a neuroscientist and associate of Katherine Solomon, is having an out-of-body experience due to the fact that she is currently being murdered by a mysterious golem-like figure: "Disoriented, she strained to make sense of her predicament. *I am a neuroscientist*, she reassured herself. *I am of sound mind"* (p. 5). Dr. Gessner believes scientific methodology and logic are equivalent to mental well-being. She is engaging in an inner dialogue to make sense of death even as the event unfolds: "*I have died*. *This is the afterlife*. Even as the notion materialized, she rejected it as absurd. *The afterlife is a shared delusion … created to make our actual life bearable"* (p. 5). Dr. Gessner represents the skeptical scientific mindset, simplified by Brown into a character that reads more like a caricature.

An out-of-body experience (or OBE) is the experience that one's consciousness has somehow separated from one's body. The experience may be of floating somewhere near one's body as a ghostlike reflection of oneself, or the experience may be of oneself becoming a perceptual field bereft of any form or clear boundary. Brown opts for the latter version in this passage from page 5: "She was without mass and form. And yet the rest of her, the *real* her—her essence, her consciousness—seemed to be quite intact and alert, floating slowly through the air…" OBEs are well-documented phenomena. However, the notion that an OBE involves consciousness literally

separating from the physical body is questionable. To truly answer the question of whether consciousness is capable of leaving its shell, you would first have to explain what *consciousness* is, and you would also have to explain what *matter* is, which gets very tricky when you get down to the subatomic level of reality. Current research indicates OBEs are physically traceable neuropsychological events, yet despite numerous anecdotal reports, no account of a person in a disembodied state accurately describing a shoe on a roof or a coin on top of a cabinet has ever been objectively verified.

We are in Dr. Gessner's mind from page 5 to the top of page 7, sharing her thoughts, experiencing the OBE from her perspective, feeling her confusion, which initiates the mystery and the tension of the story, but at the middle of page 7 we are abruptly removed from her mind (highlighted in bold type):

"Why are you doing this?!" Gessner had screamed in panic. "Who are you?!" *What are you?!*

"I am her protector," the monster replied. His voice was hollow, his accent vaguely Slavic. "She trusted you … and you betrayed her."

"Who?!" Gessner demanded.

The monster spoke a woman's name, and Gessner felt a stab of panic.

Immediately after this narrative distancing Brown shifts back to narrating the scene in close third person, and we are inside her mind: *"How can he possibly know what I have done?!"* (p. 7). But a few lines later we are taken out of her mind once again and told the following events occurred: "Racked with terror, Gessner spoke as quickly as she could through clenched teeth, frantically revealing the secrets she had vowed to keep. She answered his questions, divulging the disturbing truth about what she and her partners had created deep beneath the city of Prague" (p. 7). In addition to portraying the literal detachment of Gessner's consciousness from her body, Brown orchestrates a perspectival out-of-body experience for the reader as we oscillate between inhabiting her panicked interiority and being abruptly expelled into an external perspective where her actions are reported. Mystery authors often sacrifice narrative trust for the sake of heightening suspense, mirroring the genre's main source of tension: positioning the reader at the cusp of revelation without allowing them to be fully secure in their understanding of events.

OBE data presented at the First International Forum of Consciousness Research in 1999: 85% of the 1,185 respondents claimed to have had between two and ten OBEs, 5.5% claimed to have had more than 100 such experiences, 45% claimed to have successfully induced at least one OBE by using a specific OBE-inducing technique, 62% claimed to experience non-physical flight, 40% claimed to see their own body while floating outside of it, and 38% claimed to have passed through solid objects such as walls[1].

Dr. Gessner dies at the end of the prologue, revealing the story's metaphysical stance: "She tried to shout an appeal for mercy, but her voice was muted by a deafening thunderclap as the sky above her seemed to open wide. She felt herself gripped by an unseen force—a kind of reverse gravity—lifting her higher, dragging her upward" (p. 8). Again, we are given just enough information to conclude something intriguing is happening, but not enough to solve the mystery of what happens when we die. The end of Dr. Gessner's story serves as the beginning of Langdon and Solomon's. The understanding that death is not the end but rather the beginning is

a motif throughout the text. As happens so often in mystery novels, the beginning contains an ending (usually to a physical life), and the ending contains a beginning (usually to a new understanding of life). The first sentence of Brown's novel involves the ending of someone's story (Dr. Gessner): "*I must have died*, the woman thought" (p. 5). And the final sentence of the novel involves ushering in a new epoch of human understanding, with the delivery of Katherine's groundbreaking book to her publisher. After Gessner's death, the novel's exploration of consciousness shifts from the experiential to the theoretical, introducing the "hard problem of consciousness" in a lecture given by Katherine Solomon:

"So can we all start by agreeing on the basics? Consciousness is created by your brain—the three-pound bundle of eighty-six billion neurons inside your skull—and therefore *consciousness* is located inside our heads."

Nods all around.

"Wonderful," Katherine said. "We've all just agreed on the currently accepted model of human consciousness." After a beat, she sighed heavily. "The problem is . . . the currently accepted model is *dead wrong*. Your consciousness is *not* created by your brain. And in fact, your consciousness is not even located *inside* your head" (p. 15).

The "hard problem of consciousness" (a phrase coined by philosopher David Chalmers[2] in 1995) is crucial not only to this story's plausibility but to the plausibility of nonlocal consciousness. The story does not merely incorporate nonlocal consciousness as a plot device; a substantial portion of the novel is devoted to establishing the conceptual legitimacy of nonlocal consciousness, developing this argument across 91 of its 671 pages. But in order to properly analyze and weigh Katherine's argument, we must become familiar with other equally viable discourses and counterarguments regarding this subject. The hard problem of consciousness boils down to our inability to explain how neurobiological mechanisms produce our subjective qualitative experiences, such as the experience of redness or the feeling of pain. There seems to be no directly identifiable causal link between physical processes and their phenomenal manifestations. Philosophers and scientists have generally been divided into two camps when it comes to the hard problem of consciousness. The physicalist camp believes consciousness is produced within the brain, and it's simply a matter of time until we figure out the processes of its emergence. The other camp thinks of consciousness as something fundamental to the universe, often likening it to a radio signal, and our brains are the receivers. This understanding of consciousness is generally referred to as nonlocal consciousness. Theories of nonlocal consciousness view consciousness as an extraphysical force located outside the brain, and our brains must filter away most of this universal consciousness in order to achieve our individualized perspectives, like tuning a radio to one frequency or another. Katherine Solomon argues that the inhibitory neurotransmitter GABA plays a crucial role in this filtering process.

A theory is any model that reduces a large set of observations to a more manageable set of coherent principles which can be tested and used to make predictions. Theories are generally expressed through the conceptual frameworks of science and mathematics, striving for a sort of disembodied, nonlocal objectivity, free from subjective human perspective. Physicalist theories of consciousness are generally divided into four groups: higher-order, global workspace, predictive processing, and integrated information. Higher-order theories propose that basic

mental states become conscious only when represented by higher-order mental states. For example, a first-order mental state associated with tissue damage becomes consciously felt as pain once it is the object of a higher-order mental representation. Global workspace theory suggests that background thoughts become foreground awareness when broadcast across multiple regions of the brain working together to produce experience, the gist being that consciousness acts as a spotlight to bring certain information to our awareness while leaving the bulk of our accumulated data in the shadows of the unconscious. Predictive processing theory conjectures your brain is continuously assessing the world to see if it matches your prior model and expectations of reality, noting any differences that come into your field of awareness and adjusting its model and expectations accordingly. Integrated information theory surmises that a system can be considered conscious if it generates more information as a whole than can be generated by the sum of its parts.

Nonlocal theories of consciousness are generally divided into four groups: quantum, hyperdimensional, field consciousness (the radio signal theory), and the universal mind. Quantum theories of consciousness incorporate the quantum mechanical concepts of non-determinism (i.e., subatomic behavior is inherently unpredictable), superposition (i.e., the ability of a particle to exist in multiple positions or states simultaneously), and entanglement (i.e., a phenomenon where two or more particles become correlated in such a way that measuring one instantly affects the state of the others, regardless of the distance between them) in an effort to explain the qualitative experience of consciousness. The leading proponents of quantum consciousness theory are anesthesiologist Stuart Hameroff and physicist Roger Penrose. Their "Orchestrated Objective Reduction" theory proposes that consciousness arises from quantum processes (i.e., orchestrated collapses of the quantum wave function) occurring within the microtubules comprising the structure of neurons in the brain[3]. Hyperdimensional theories of consciousness posit there are eleven dimensions, ten involving space and one involving time, but seven of the spatial dimensions are so small (on the Planck scale) that they are undetectable to our four-dimensional senses and instruments, and consciousness arises within these imperceptible dimensions. Field theories of consciousness postulate that the brain does not generate consciousness but instead acts as a receiver for nonlocal fields of consciousness, similar to how a radio tunes into certain frequencies. The fourth view of nonlocal consciousness sees consciousness as fundamental and all-pervasive. Consciousness is everywhere, and everything is imbued with it. The main issue with every nonlocal solution to the hard problem of consciousness is that it merely moves the source of mystery one step further, doing nothing to unveil the root causes and underlying mechanics of consciousness.

Katherine Solomon is an adherent of a combination of "field" and "universal mind" theories of nonlocal consciousness, as revealed in this passage: "'The theory,' Katherine had said, 'is called *nonlocal consciousness*. And it's based on the premise that consciousness is *not* localized to your brain . . . but rather it is *everywhere*. That is to say, consciousness permeates the universe. Consciousness is, in fact, one of the fundamental building blocks of our world'" (p. 262). The prologue's rendering of a disembodied OBE as an objective event indicates that Katherine's specific take on nonlocal consciousness is at least partially correct according to the physics of this novel's world.

The term *out-of-body experience* was coined in 1943 by G.N.M. Tyrell[4]. In 1968, Celia Green conducted the first large-scale study of OBEs, querying 400 subjects[5]. She proposed the term *metachoric experience* to denote a semi-conscious state wherein a person's entire field of perception is replaced with a hallucination that incorporates perceived elements from the real world. In 2001, Dr. Sam Parnia and colleagues investigated OBE claims by placing figures on suspended boards facing the ceiling, not visible from the floor. According to Dr. Parnia, "Anybody who claimed to have left their body and be near the ceiling during resuscitation attempts would be expected to identify those targets. If, however, such perceptions are psychological, then one would obviously not expect the targets to be identified." The year-long investigation consisted of 63 cardiac arrest survivors, 7 of whom had memories of the time they were unconscious, and 4 of whom had near-death experiences (according to the investigation's criteria for such phenomena). The philosopher Keith Augustine later confirmed that all OBE target identification experiments in Dr. Parnia's investigation produced negative results[6].

In 2008, twenty-five U.K. and U.S. hospitals began participation in a large-scale OBE study coordinated once again by Dr. Sam Parnia, known as the AWARE study. As part of the study, Dr. Parnia placed hidden targets on shelves that could only be seen from above. According to Dr. Parnia, "if no one sees the pictures, it shows these experiences are illusions or false memories." Dr. Parnia issued a statement in 2014 indicating the first phase of the project was complete. No subjects saw any of the images that were mounted out of sight. Only 9% of the participants had NDEs, and only 2% reported hearing and seeing events in an OBE. In the words of parapsychologist Caroline Watt, "The one 'verifiable period of conscious awareness' that Dr. Parnia was able to report did not relate to this objective test. Rather, it was a patient giving a supposedly accurate report of events during his resuscitation. He didn't identify the pictures, he described the defibrillator machine noise. But that's not very impressive since many people know what goes on in an emergency room setting from seeing recreations on television[7]."

Dr. Shahar Arzy and colleagues demonstrated in 2006 that self-location and body recognition involve two posterior brain regions: the temporoparietal junction (TPJ) is involved in spatially situating oneself within one's environment; and the extrastriate body area (EBA) is involved in spatially situating oneself within one's body[8]. Mentally embodied self-location mainly involves the extrastriate body area (EBA), whereas disembodied self-location mainly involves the temporoparietal junction (TPJ).

Returning to Katherine's argument, Robert Langdon recalls her lecture from the night before, which opened with an image of a human brain: "'I realize it looks more like a mound of very old hamburger, but I can assure you, this organ is nothing short of miraculous. It contains approximately eighty-six *billion* neurons. Together they form over a hundred *trillion* synaptic connections, which can process complex information almost instantly […] We each store millions of gigabytes of data in here—images, memories, lifetimes of education, skill sets, languages . . . all sorted and organized neatly in this tiny space […] Materialist scientists remain baffled as to how an organ so *small* could possibly hold such *vast* quantities of information'" (p. 100). The section establishes Katherine's authority through the introduction of neuroscientific facts while prepping us for the intellectual journey ahead. By framing the expositional passage within the familiar setting of a lecture hall, Brown transforms what might otherwise seem like intrusive narrative explanation into an immersive scene. The reader receives the information along with Langdon and the audience, thereby reinforcing the sense of participation in the

unfolding story. This method of informational dissemination recurs throughout the novel, making complex ideas feel integrated rather than imposed. Furthermore, we associate lecture halls with intellectual authority and professionalism, making the reader more receptive to the information being divulged.

Later in the novel, we revisit Katherine's lecture in another flashback, this time from the perspective of the golem-like entity listening to her offer proof that physicalist theories of consciousness are inadequate: "'There exists an extraordinary phenomenon,' Katherine had said, 'that proves beyond any shadow of a doubt that our traditional views of consciousness are entirely wrong. It's called sudden savant syndrome, and the clinical definition is as follows: 'The abrupt manifestation in a human mind of a unique skill or knowledge that previously was nonexistent'" (p. 122). In addition to the murder of Dr. Gessner—and perhaps more important to the reader—the novel's deeper mysteries are *what is consciousness?* and *what happens when we die?* These questions bleed beyond the page into the reader's real life, not just their imagination. The narrative is attempting to smuggle its version of reality into the reader while also transporting the reader into its world.

Any novel seriously concerned with the subject of life after death would be incomplete without acknowledging the work of Dr. Raymond Moody, arguably the most famous spokesperson for the life-after-death argument: "Langdon's only encounter with near-death experiences had been in the pages of Raymond Moody's 1975 bestseller, *Life After Life*, the book credited with persuading scientists to look more seriously at the possibility that death was not the end of a journey . . . but rather just the beginning" (p. 192). Interviews with Dr. Moody always involve reminding the audience that he famously coined the phrase "near-death experience" in 1975, failing to mention that almost a century earlier, in 1896, Victor Egger coined the term "experience of imminent death" to describe life reviews, tunnels of light, time dilation, and other phenomena that climbers said they experienced during falls from great heights[9]. Claiming Dr. Moody originated a widely recognized term is an attempt to bolster his reputation, but the omission of Egger's prior thanatological contribution undermines the very credibility the claim seeks to establish, suggesting Moody's authority relies on a constructed narrative and selective framing. Such manufactured authority is characteristic of most works of fiction. *The Secret of Secrets*, like so many religious, scientific, and philosophical narratives about consciousness, death, and the afterlife, constructs credibility through strategic framing (e.g., omitting counterarguments, the biased orchestration of what counts as knowledge).

Katherine Solomon's argument for the plausibility of nonlocal consciousness incorporates a reasoned appeal to ignorance: "'Yes, and I agree that repeatability is a reasonable burden of proof at the *macroscopic* level. But at the *quantum* level, things work differently. The quantum world is understood to be *unpredictable*. In fact, unpredictability is quite literally its most agreed-upon state […] The language of the quantum world […] is literally the language of *unpredictability*—probability waves, quantum fluctuations, uncertainty principles, probabilistic tunneling, chaos, quantum interference, decoherence, superpositions, dualities. All of this translates loosely to 'We don't know what's going to happen because the classical rules of physics don't apply!'" (p. 338). Her argument is that repeatability is an unreasonable burden of proof when dealing with the subject of consciousness and paranormal phenomena, implying scientific methodology actually obstructs scientific progress in some cases. Dr. Raymond Moody

echoes this sentiment in his most recent interview at the time of this writing[10], stating, “The logic of unintelligibility may very well give us rational proof of an afterlife.”

Reasoned appeals to ignorance use the absence of definitive knowledge to reframe uncertainty as evidence of possibility. Katherine’s argument concerning repeatability transitions into the radio analogy of nonlocal consciousness, never specifying what kind of information the brain-radio is receiving, or how the brain-radio receives it, or where the transmission originates: “‘In the nonlocal consciousness model, your brain is a kind of radio that *receives* consciousness, and like all radios it has countless stations bombarding it all the time […] The radio itself has the capacity to receive all stations, but without a way to filter the frequencies that flow in, it would play all those frequencies at once. The human brain works the same way; it has a complex series of filters to prevent the mind from being *overloaded* with too much sensory stimulus…’” (p. 340). The process of radio communication involves more than just the signal. The receiver of the signal, the actual radio, is a specific model with specific parts that vary in durability and performance from brand to brand. The signal, in this case consciousness, is useless without a properly functioning radio, in this case a functional brain. Consciousness may very well continue in some manner beyond the body, but there is no indication it would be anything like the version you are experiencing right now through your nervous system. In other words, even if consciousness exists outside the brain, perceptions can only be meaningfully and coherently perceived through the senses; otherwise, what use is there for perceptual interface technology such as eyes, ears, noses, and tongues? In this scenario, disembodied consciousness would be nothing more than static, countering the notion that “you” (your experience of reality and self-aware identity) would somehow still exist. This is the standard argument against the radio analogy of disembodied consciousness, which is conspicuously absent from the novel’s discourse.

In the passage quoted above, rather than relying on the lecture hall setting to confer intellectual credibility, the text uses Langdon himself, whom we have come to regard as the story’s embodiment of skeptical yet open-minded inquiry, to reinforce Katherine’s argument for the nonlocal interpretation of consciousness, validating her points through authorially contrived affirmations such as “That makes perfect sense…” (p. 340) and “Makes perfect sense so far…” (p. 342). The fact that Langdon, whose intellectual authority has been established throughout five prior novels, finds the argument increasingly plausible facilitates our being able to find it plausible as well. Underlying Brown’s novel is the notion that knowledge emerges through persuasion, dialogue, and shared practices within communities, as opposed to the unveiling of eternal, immutable truths. Ideas occur in specific social contexts and are thus bound up with specific social evaluations, as is language itself. Language is in a ceaseless flow of becoming. As philosopher and literary critic M. M. Bakhtin writes, “Language acquires life and historically evolves in concrete verbal communication, and not in the abstract linguistic system of language, nor in the individual psyche of speakers.[11]”

Philosopher and literary critic Julia Kristeva, who coined the term “intertextuality” in 1966, spoke of intertextuality in terms of a text’s horizontal axis (which represents the relationship of speaker to audience) and its vertical axis (which represents the relationship of text to context), highlighting an important fact: each text is an intersection of texts where at least one other text can be read. The utilization of one text by another transforms both texts, giving them additional interpretive dimensions. The encroachment of science into the realms of spirituality creates

hybrid interpretations of mystical phenomena, arising in new language systems with specialized vocabularies that enable and encourage alternate ways to read age-old experiences, such as we find in the musings of Langdon on page 597: "*Perhaps an exorcist is not trying to coax a demon out of a body . . . but rather trying to retune the body's receiver to block the unwanted station.*" In post-structural semiotics, the word *exorcist* does not have a direct link to the objective world; it's a sign, and signs do not possess inherent meanings. Signs possess meaning only in relation to other signs, with the play of signifiers never arriving at a stable signified. Through the dialogue Langdon is having with himself, the word *exorcist* is being repurposed. But notice how the ancient notion of an exorcist and the updated version Langdon is currently entertaining both require a degree of faith. The older usage of the word invites one to wonder how the spirits came to be, and the updated usage invites one to wonder how the signals came to be.

The radio signal analogy of consciousness was popularized by Upton Sinclair with his book *Mental Radio* (Sinclair, 1930). The book describes Sinclair's endeavor to demonstrate and provide scientific evidence that his second wife Mary had telepathic abilities. Sinclair had Mary attempt to duplicate 290 pictures which were drawn by her brother, who served as the "sender" in these telepathy experiments. Mary, the "receiver," relying on psychic impressions rather than sight, would sit in a different room than her brother and try to copy the images he drew. The experiment treats thoughts as if they are signals that can be transmitted from one person to another via a shared mental field or frequency. Sinclair claims Mary successfully duplicated 65 of her brother's drawings, with 155 "partial successes" and 70 failures. Critics dismissed Sinclair's findings because his experiment was not conducted in a controlled scientific environment. Mary's telepathic ability was later tested by psychologist William McDougall in a controlled setting, and the results were unimpressive[12]. Sinclair's understanding of psychic communication relies on consciousness being collective, networked, and nonlocal, conceptually paralleling later post-structuralist views of authorship. Literary theorist Roland Barthes, in his influential essay "The Death of the Author," rejects the notion of authorial ownership of a work's genesis and interpretation, declaring, "We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single theological meaning, or the message of the Author-God, but a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture… the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter ones with others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them." Elsewhere he describes text as "woven entirely of citations, references, echoes, cultural languages antecedent and contemporary, which cut across it through and through in a vast stereophony.[13]"

It's worth noting that Albert Einstein wrote the preface to *Mental Radio*, included here in its entirety: "I have read the book of Upton Sinclair with great interest and am convinced that the same deserves the most earnest consideration, not only of the laity, but also of the psychologists by profession. The results of the telepathic experiments carefully and plainly set forth in this book stand surely far beyond those which a nature investigator holds to be thinkable. On the other hand, it is out of the question in the case of so conscientious an observer and writer as Upton Sinclair that he is carrying on a conscious deception of the reading world; his good faith and dependability are not to be doubted. So if somehow the facts here set forth rest not upon telepathy, but upon some unconscious hypnotic influence from person to

person, this also would be of high psychological interest. In no case should the psychologically interested circles pass over this book heedlessly.[14]" Although Einstein does not endorse Sinclair's conclusions, he argues for a willingness to entertain possibilities that are currently beyond our ability to measure and test, prioritizing open-mindedness over rigid adherence to existing scientific doctrine. Broadening the imaginative horizon in turn leads to a broadening of what is considered scientifically and technologically plausible, which in turn brings about further broadening of the imaginative horizon, creating a continuous cycle of possibility. Sinclair would not have had the imaginative resources underpinning his concept of consciousness without the work of Guglielmo Marconi, who is generally credited with the invention of the radio, transmitting the first transatlantic radio signal in 1901 through a wireless telegraph system. Sinclair published his book in 1930. Radio became popular in the 1920s, expanding public imagination to integrate the objective reality of nonlocal communication via disembodied voices. Marconi's invention emerged from over three millennia of accumulated inquiry, expanding upon the work of Nikola Tesla, who advanced the work of Heinrich Hertz, who demonstrably proved the work of James Clerk Maxwell, who systematized the work of Michael Faraday, who questioned the work of Sir Isaac Newton, and so on back to the earliest Greek, Indian, and Mesopotamian mathematical innovators, with each new discovery reshaping the imaginative landscape of their successors, thereby reshaping the physical landscapes of the world.

The first person on record in Western literature to speak of nonlocal consciousness is the Greek philosopher Anaxagoras (c. 500-428 BCE), who describes a universal principle of order he calls *Nous*, which translates to *Mind* or *Reason*. The earliest mention of nonlocal consciousness in Eastern literature is found in the *Upanishads* (c. 800-300 BCE), a collection of philosophical texts which suggest the essential oneness of Brahman (the ultimate, unchanging reality and universal spirit) and Atman (the individual soul, considered a spark of Brahman). The term "nonlocal mind" (and by extension "nonlocal consciousness") was coined by physician and author Larry Dossey in 1989, appearing in his book *Recovering the Soul* (Random House, 1989). According to the back cover of the book: "Dr. Dossey synthesizes the ideas of eminent scientists such as Schrödinger, Einstein, Gödel, and Margenau, with the time-honored knowledge of visionaries and mystics to present convincing evidence for a nonlocal, holistic view of mind and reality that can explain transcendental experiences. In short, he provides new proof of the existence of the soul.[15]" Despite the skeptical reception of his work by the general scientific community, his ideas are considered foundational by those who seek to further the boundaries of conventional science, i.e., researchers of transpersonal psychology and the noetic sciences.

A brief discussion of the CIA's involvement in psychic research culminates in *The Secret of Secrets*' most blatant appeal to authority: "The father of American psychology, William James, had famously said: *In order to disprove the assertion that all crows are black, one white crow is sufficient*. As Katherine described in her manuscript, an entire *flock* of white crows had now been flushed out . . . by noetic science, by quantum physics, and by the work of an impressive cadre of academics who were vocal advocates of nonlocal consciousness. Respected minds like Harold Puthoff, Russel Targ, Edwin May, Dean Radin, Brenda Dunne, Robert Morris, Julia Mossbridge, Robert Jahn, and many others all had made astounding findings in diverse fields like plasma physics, nonlinear mathematics, and consciousness anthropology, all of which supported the notion of nonlocal consciousness" (pp. 408-409). It should be noted that many

scientists have publicly criticized the findings of Harold Puthoff[16], Russel Targ[16], Edwin May[17], Dean Radin[18], and all the others on Katherine's list, citing a lack of scientific rigor, methodological flaws, and mishandled statistics, characterizing their research as pseudoscience. At the same time, it should also be noted that many innovators throughout history initially met resistance from their peers.

A key part of Katherine Solomon's nonlocal consciousness research is revealed on page 346: "'First, I located a terminally ill patient not too far from the lab—a retired neurologist himself—who agreed to undergo his death process while enclosed inside a new kind of imaging machine—a real-time magnetic resonance spectroscopy device. I explained that I would be able to watch his brain chemistry moment by moment as he died. He felt gratified by the chance to provide accurate data like we've never been able to measure previously.'" Except we have been able to measure such an experience. This passage stems from research conducted separately by two neuroscientists, Dr. Jimo Borjigin and Dr. Ajmal Zemmar. A study led by Dr. Jimo Borjigin in 2013 found that parts of the brain designated as the "hot zone" for consciousness become extremely active with high-frequency electrical signals called gamma waves moments after taking dying patients off their ventilator. In one patient the signals remained detectable for more than six minutes. "As she died, [the patient's] brain was functioning in a kind of hyperdrive," reported Borjigin. "For about two minutes after her oxygen was cut off, there was an intense synchronization of her brain waves, a state associated with many cognitive functions, including heightened attention and memory. The synchronization dampened for about eighteen seconds, then intensified again for more than four minutes. It faded for a minute, then came back for a third time[19]." According to Borjigin, "Different parts of [the dying patient's] brain were suddenly in close communication with each other. The most intense connections started immediately after her oxygen stopped, and lasted for nearly four minutes. There was another burst of connectivity more than five minutes and twenty seconds after she was taken off life support. In particular, areas of her brain associated with processing conscious experience—areas that are active when we move through the waking world, and when we have vivid dreams—were communicating with those involved in memory formation. So were parts of the brain associated with empathy. Even as she slipped irrevocably deeper into death, something that looked astonishingly like life was taking place over several minutes in [the dying patient's] brain[20]." In 2022, Dr. Ajmal Zemmar inadvertently recorded the brain activity of a patient who died during a brain scan. In Dr. Zemmar's own words, "We measured 900 seconds of brain activity around the time of death and set a specific focus to investigate what happened in the thirty seconds before and after the heart stopped beating. Just before and after the heart stopped working, we saw [an increase] in a specific band of neural oscillations, so-called gamma oscillations, but also in others such as delta, theta, alpha and beta oscillations[21]." Neural oscillations, also called brain waves, are associated with cognition, specifically such functions as thinking, remembering, and dreaming.

Consistent with the novel's tendency of connecting local narrative details to its broader, nonlocal thematic argument, the reason for Katherine's obsession with proving the nonlocality of consciousness is revealed as she and Langdon are waiting for a computer terminal to power up in order to access data from an advanced virtual reality device: "The experience had changed her life, cementing her passion for consciousness as a field of study. The experiment began with her Princeton professor asking Katherine to stand all alone in an empty room. Over the

intercom, he instructed her to don her VR goggles. When she did, she was instantly transported to a vast meadow where she stood among flowers and trees […] Standing only two feet away from her was an exact double of … *herself* […] Next, the professor's voice on the intercom instructed Katherine to reach up and place a hand on the shoulder of her ghost double […] Fully expecting to touch nothing but air, she was shocked when her hand came to rest on an *actual* physical shoulder. More shocking still, in that exact instant, Katherine felt the weight of her hand on her *own* shoulder!" (pp. 468-469). A study conducted by Olaf Blanke and colleagues in 2007 demonstrated that conflicting visual and tactile stimuli can disrupt the sense of spatial unity between the self and the body. Using virtual reality headsets to view their own body from behind, participants would begin to experience the virtual body they saw in front of them as if it were their own[22].

Despite the neuroscientific factuality of OBEs, we are told Katherine's OBE experiment involved trickery: "After she had donned her VR goggles and stood in position, a lab tech had slipped silently into the room and stood directly in front of Katherine. When she reached up to place her hand on her 'ghost self,' Katherine unwittingly placed her hand on the shoulder of the lab tech, who simultaneously placed *her* hand on Katherine's shoulder" (p. 470). Although Katherine becomes aware of the experiment's duplicity, the jarring experience is enough to liberate her imagination from former ways of categorizing and delimiting consciousness. Perhaps Dan Brown is aiming for a similar experience through reading this novel, attempting to destabilize the skeptical materialist's signifier-signified relationship between biological death (signifier) and the cessation of identity (signified), at the same time undermining, possibly even usurping, dominant religious ideologies that tend to suppress unorthodox imagination. The passage on page 645 provides a clear motive for such an agenda:

"And it's your theory that this troubling pattern stems from humans' fear of death?"

"It's not *my* theory," Katherine said. "It's scientifically proven in mountains of statistical evidence gathered through observational analysis, behavioral experiments, and scientific polling. The most important point in the research, however, shows that those who do *not* fear death, for whatever reason, tend to exhibit behavior that is more benevolent, accepting of others, cooperative, and caring about the environment…"

The Secret of Secrets is a strategically hybridized text, blending formal mechanics of suspense with rhetorical modes of scientific and philosophical discourse, positioning the reader's suspension of disbelief in a liminal space where empirical authority and imaginative speculation mutually reinforce each other. Several mysteries common to the genre overtly drive the plot: the murders of Dr. Brigita Gessner and Michael Harris, the nature of the golem-like entity, Sasha Vesna's role, and the motives of the shadowy agents attempting to prevent Katherine Solomon from publishing her book. Interwoven throughout these puzzles, the novel also explores deeper, more covert mysteries the reader must negotiate beyond the final page: what happens when we die, what is consciousness, what are the social repercussions of science and technology colonizing religious domains, how are neuroscience and quantum physics transforming spiritual discourse, and what constitutes proof in the 21st century?

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